



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Mushroom crop gets new protection against disease

OLYMPIA – The state Department of Agriculture (WSDA) this month notified mushroom growers that a fungicide called “Topsin” has been temporarily approved to combat green mold, a disease that can destroy a mushroom crop. The announcement followed a review by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Topsin, which contains the active ingredient thiophanate-methyl, is used to protect fruit and vegetable crops. The approval allows mushroom growers to blend Topsin into the growing compost used to raise mushrooms to help control green mold.

Mushrooms rank 28th among Washington’s top 40 agricultural commodities. During the 2001-2002 growing season, Washington produced about 12.5 million pounds of mushrooms with a value of \$16.7 million. Mushroom production is a significant employer in Thurston County with some 200 employees.

EPA registers pesticides for specific uses. And, WSDA regulates the distribution and use of pesticides in Washington. Topsin is registered for use in this state on a variety of crops, including apples, beans, cherries, melons, onions, squash, strawberries and wheat. The [American Mushroom Institute](#) asked WSDA last fall to seek an exemption from EPA that would allow growers to use Topsin on mushrooms. The exemption is needed because the company that manufactures Benlate, the only fungicide registered for mushrooms that effectively controls green mold, discontinued the product in 2001.

This is the first exemption WSDA has requested for the mushroom industry.

To gain EPA’s approval for an exemption, WSDA must demonstrate that an emergency condition exists. The condition must be urgent and non-routine, and must meet three criteria: 1) no effective registered pesticide is available to control the pest, 2) no economically or environmentally feasible alternative practices are available, and 3) the situation involves introduction of a new pest, will present significant risks to human health or the environment, or cause significant economic loss.

Prior to submitting a request to EPA, WSDA must also determine that the proposed use will not cause unreasonable adverse effects to human health or the environment.

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